



UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

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Wyoming's Climate: December 2012

Snowpack

Percent of median snowpack in Wyoming increased or roughly held its own for the most part at the end of December compared to the beginning of the month. The largest gains were in the south and east while the northwest remained largely unchanged with a few small changes up and down. The Lower Green, Little Snake, Upper North Platte, and Belle Fourche increased by quite a few percent, though when comparing end of November to end of December absolute values, a small change can result in a modest increase in percent compared to the Median.

While there were increases, the Big Horn and Tongue River Basins in the north are still below normal at 89% and 71% of their medians respectively. The southern basins of the Little Snake and Upper North Platte are around 80% to 90% of median.

While improved, the east, comprised of the South Platte, Laramie, Belle Fourche, and Cheyenne River Basins are still only at 60% to 75% of median. At this time of the year, though, 100% of median for the Cheyenne River Basin would amount to only a little over 3 inches snow water equivalent. The basin with the lowest percentage is the Lower North Platte which stands at 29%

Precipitation

Precipitation was fairly mixed throughout the state in December. With a few exceptions, the eastern half of the state was generally around 75% of Normal or less with about a quarter of the stations being under 50% of their Normals. This was an improvement from November, though, at least as far as how much precipitation was received compared to Normal.

The southwest which was, for the most part, quite dry in November saw improvement in December. With the continued exception of the Rock Springs area, most stations in the western counties (Teton, Lincoln, Sublette, and Uinta) and Sweetwater County were at or well above Normal.

Big Horn and Washakie counties, which received well above normal precipitation in November, were somewhat drier in December although still at or just a bit below Normal.

Temperature

The above-Normal temperatures seen in November continued in many parts of the state during December although not to the same extent. Unlike November, there were a few stations experiencing average temperatures up to 2°F below Normal. Another handful of stations were up to 1°F below their Normal. On the other end, though, areas such as parts of Washakie, Hot Springs, and Fremont counties were upwards of 5°F above the Normal.

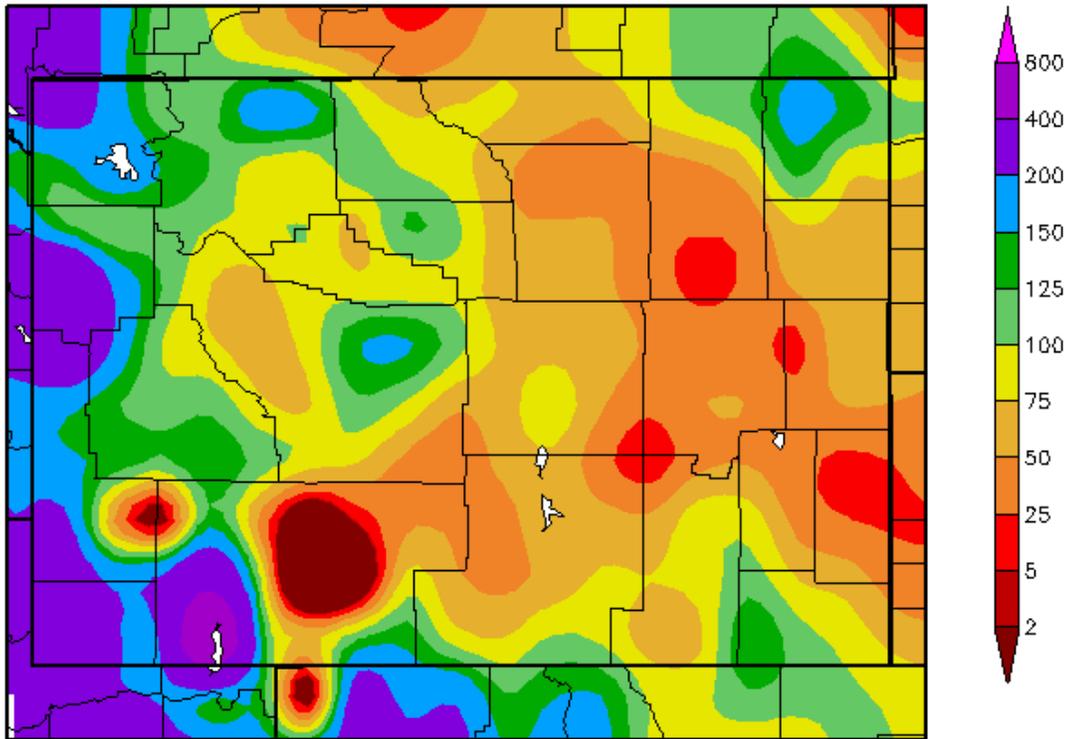
The cooler temperatures for December resulted from the latter part of the month being well below Normal thanks in part to a persistent snow cover over most of the state. This cold is expected to continue into the first part 2013.

There were some areas of improvement in the drought status in December. D0 (Abnormally Dry) in the northwest was expanded to cover most of Teton county. D3 (Extreme Drought) was pulled back from northwest Uinta County and out of southern Lincoln County so that only a small swath remains in extreme eastern Lincoln County.

Unfortunately there was also some degradation. D4 (Exceptional Drought) was added to a small area in central Sweetwater County. There was no improvement in the D4 in the east and the two areas of D3 in Wyoming were merged to now include the southern half of Johnson County, all of Natrona and Converse counties, all but extreme southeast Carbon County, and almost the northern half of Albany County. This expansion left almost two-thirds of Wyoming in D3 or D4.

This report was prepared by the Wyoming State Climate Office, which is part of the Wyoming Water Resources Data System at the University of Wyoming. More information can be found at: <http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu> and http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/sco/climate_office.html. Special thanks to the National Weather Service's Riverton and Cheyenne Office, the NRCS Casper Office, and the Cheyenne US Geological Survey Office, and Wyoming CoCoRaHS observers for supplying much of the data and information used in this report.

Percent of Normal Precipitation (%)
12/1/2012 – 12/31/2012

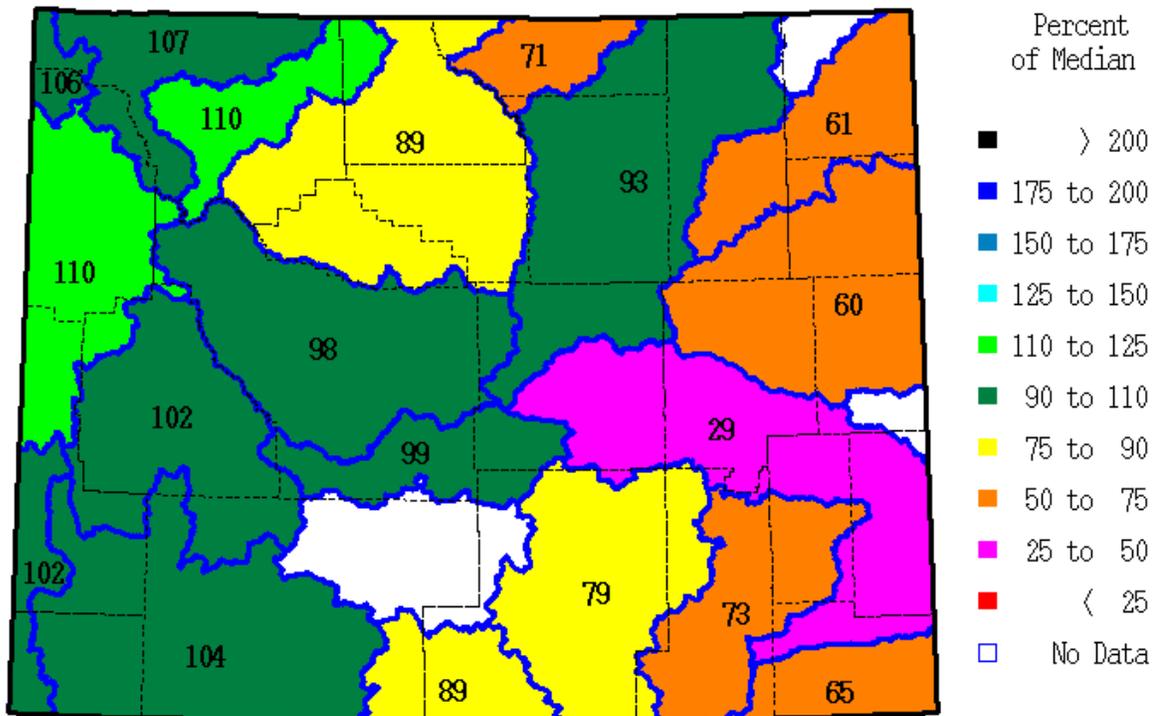


Generated 1/2/2013 at HPRCC using provisional data.

Regional Climate Centers

Map showing December 2012 precipitation as a percentage of historical averages (vs. 1981-2010 “normal” period) for Wyoming. Courtesy of the High Plains Regional Climate Center.

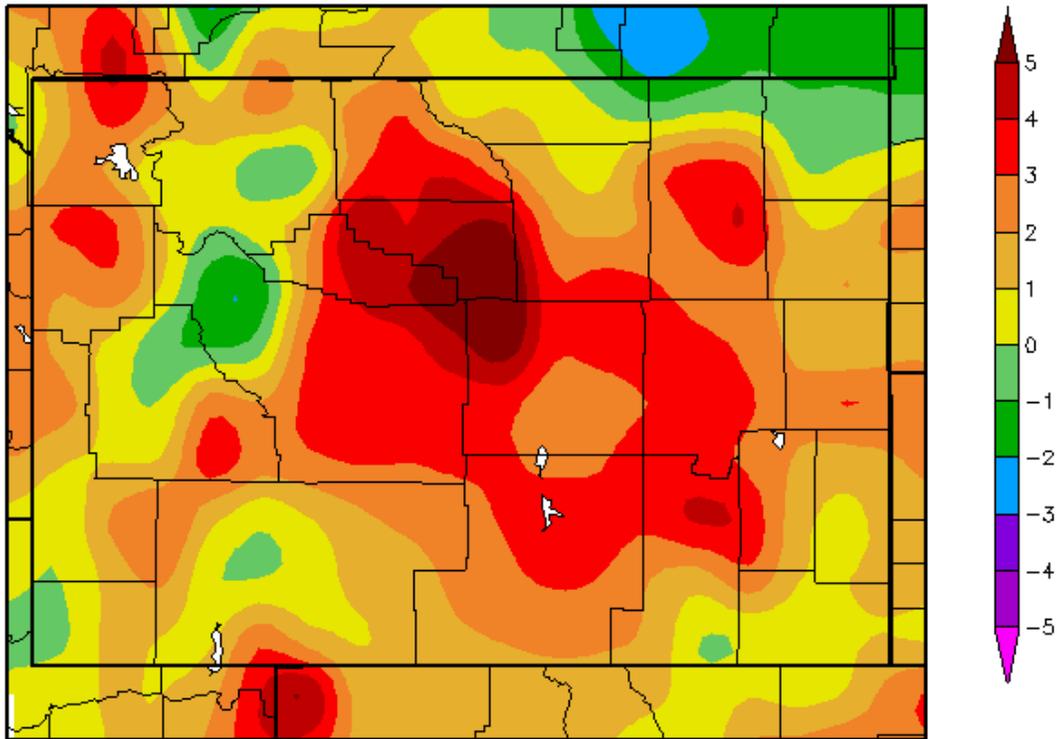
SWE % of Median as of Thursday, 03 January 2013



* = Data may not provide a valid measure of conditions

Map showing end of December snow water equivalent as a percentage of historical averages (vs. 1981-2010 "normal" period) for Wyoming. Courtesy of the NRCS National Water and Climate Center, map by Wyoming State Climate Office.

Departure from Normal Temperature (F)
12/1/2012 – 12/31/2012



Generated 1/2/2013 at HPRCC using provisional data.

Regional Climate Centers

Map showing mean December 2012 temperatures as departures from historical averages (vs. 1981-2010 “normal” period) for Wyoming. Courtesy of the High Plains Regional Climate Center.

U.S. Drought Monitor

January 1, 2013

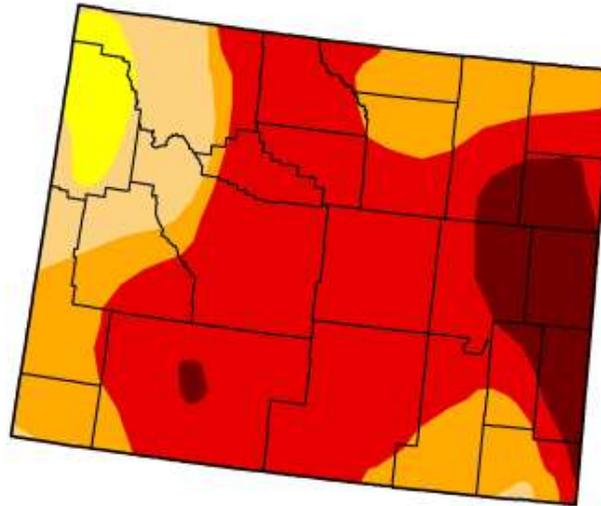
Valid 7 a.m. EST

Wyoming

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.00	100.00	96.15	86.03	64.23	10.51
Last Week (12/25/2012 map)	0.00	100.00	96.15	86.03	64.23	10.51
3 Months Ago (10/02/2012 map)	0.00	100.00	98.01	86.55	57.93	7.64
Start of Calendar Year (01/01/2013 map)	0.00	100.00	96.15	86.03	64.23	10.51
Start of Water Year (09/25/2012 map)	0.00	100.00	98.01	87.30	58.34	2.72
One Year Ago (12/27/2011 map)	99.84	0.16	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Intensity:



The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>



Released Thursday, January 3, 2013

Richard Heim, National Climatic Data Center, NOAA

Map showing Wyoming Drought Status as of the end of December 2012. Courtesy of the US Drought Monitor.